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SUBJECT: Goma Report September 26: Signs of
FARDC Compliance as CNDP Counterattacks

¶1. (SBU) Summary: FARDC appears September 26 to have begun withdrawal from the eastern (Rutshuru) zone of separation. FARDC and the territorial administrator helped quell a demonstration in Rutshuru. CNDP has counterattacked in the northern zone. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) FARDC showed the first signs September 26 of living up to the government's promises to abide by the disengagement plan it purported to accept on September 18. The North Kivu brigade observed what it described as the "possible beginning" of FARDC withdrawal from its forward positions at Ntamugenga and Mutabo in the eastern zone of separation (with no movement as yet from Kisherero). This possible withdrawal follows reinforcement by the FARDC the previous day of those same forward positions. CNDP, in a press statement, notes the FARDC withdrawal but says the FARDC unit at Ntamugenga was withdrawn so that it could attack Tongo.

¶3. (SBU) Another positive sign was the FARDC's and government's handling of the mass anti-MONUC demonstration at Rutshuru. FARDC took up positions within Rutshuru from the early morning, and the territorial administrator (a major instigator of anti-MONUC sentiment) went on the radio to call upon the populace to stand down. A large crowd gathered and barricaded the roads, but FARDC dismantled the barricades, no major looting or stone-throwing occurred, and the crowds dispersed.

¶4. (SBU) Meanwhile, according to the afternoon briefing by the North Kivu brigade, CNDP reacted to the major FARDC advance into the northern sector of CNDP territory that had taken place the previous day. FARDC had pushed forward September 25 as far as Tongo, without incurring CNDP resistance. On September 26 CNDP engaged FARDC along a wide swathe from just east of Katsiru to Kabizo, north of Tongo. FARDC was seen to be retreating (running away) not only from positions which FARDC had captured the previous day at Mashango, Buranda, and Kabizo, but from positions well inside previously held FARDC-held territory at Rujobeshe (just southeast of Katsiru) and Ranguba (northeast of Katsiru). It is not clear whether CNDP will continue to press its counterattack, for example on Katsiru. As of the briefing, FARDC was believed still to have a force present in Tongo. It was not known whether CNDP had surrounded that force, or whether that force still had a means of retreat on the road east to Rutshuru. The consequences on the civilian populace of this adventure on the part of FARDC are unknown but presumably serious.

¶5. (SBU) The francophone team which MONUC sent to Bunagana in CNDP territory September 25 reports that it met with low-level local CNDP officers who did not have decision-making authority. These officers said, however, that CNDP would make no withdrawals from the proposed eastern zone of separation until FARDC had fully withdrawn from Ntamugenga, Mutabo, and Kisherero. They also said that MONUC's proposed zone of separation made too great demands on CNDP and not enough on FARDC. The main focal area is Rugari, where CNDP holds Himbi Height a mere kilometer from the Rutshuru highway and where MONUC is proposing that CNDP move three kilometers east. The CNDP

officers said that at Rugari FARDC should move to the western side of the highway. Meanwhile, the CNDP press statement says that FARDC has launched an attack from Rugari on the CNDP at Kanombe (a clear admission that CNDP has reoccupied Kanombe, which was previously within the Rutshuru buffer zone).

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